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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT WASIT: PC MEMBERS ATTEMPT TO REMOVE IP CHIEF

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Robert Kagler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

[11.](#) (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Summary: During a July 11 meeting at the PRT, Wasit Provincial Council (PC) member Saa'd Sharhan and Wasit Chief of Police General Abdul Haneen (both political independents) discussed an ongoing attempt by religious parties to appeal to Prime Minister Maliki to remove General Haneen from office. While the majority of PC members endorsed the attempt, it was carried out unofficially, apparently without participation from the governor and the PC Chair. Saa'd Sharhan and General Haneen believe religious parties attempted to remove Haneen due to his crackdown on religious militias in Wasit beginning in April 2008. Saa'd - who has links to Sistani -- also said that Sistani had distanced himself from religious parties in Wasit and elsewhere, advising his followers to stay away from politics altogether. End Summary.

[12.](#) (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) In April 2008, Haneen effectively responded to a JAM assault on the police station in the small provincial district town of Al Hayy. After securing the station and occupying the local JAM headquarters the police confiscated a number of weapons and arrested approximately 40 suspects. Following these actions Haneen was openly criticized by PC members from religious parties. Four of these PC members, Afra Jamil Abbas (Fadilah), Ahmad Shihab (Sadr Trend) and Bassim Ali Kradi and Mudhir Ne'ema (both Da'wa) drafted a letter to Prime Minister Maliki complaining about the conduct of the police and army in Wasit province. This letter was signed by 28 PC members, also from a combination of religious parties, and sent directly to the Prime Minister. The PC Chair and Governor denied any knowledge of the letter.

[13.](#) (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) In response to the letter, the MOI ordered Wasit ISF to establish an investigative committee and ask the PC for evidence of ISF misconduct. The committee was established on July 13 and is led by Wasit IP COL Mohammed Nadem. According to Saa'd, the PC had no evidence that was immediately available but promised to prepare evidence to present to the committee.

[14.](#) (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Explaining that an independent chief of police will always have conflict with religious militias, Haneen linked the ouster effort to the recent ISF crackdown on militias in Wasit. He claimed the religious parties initially tried to bribe him, and when these efforts failed the parties initiated an effort to have him replaced with a police chief they could control. Saa'd Sharhan insisted that many of the 28 PC members were not aware of the true reason for the document and simply signed it without understanding that it part of an effort to remove the Chief of Police.

[15.](#) (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Saa'd Sharhan is also the secretary and son-in-law of Sheikh Juwad Assawi, the senior Sistani cleric in Wasit Province. The dominant bloc of the Wasit PC consists of 31 members of List 221, a slate that members advertise as being 'endorsed by Sistani.' Despite his Sistani ties, Saa'd is not part of the List. Saa'd said that Sistani will not support any party (or any 'Sistani List') in the upcoming provincial elections, wants an open and free election to take place, and has instructed his followers to vote for 'good people.' Saa'd told a short story of a recent

meeting Sistani had with a Christian priest. After meeting the priest, Sistani told his followers that if the priest would provide for the people he would choose him at the election. Saa'd made it clear that Sistani wanted people to look for the qualifications of the candidate and to vote for the best qualified individual. Further, Sistani is reported to have told religious leaders that they should stay away from government and politics. Saa'd remarked that in the last election the religious parties cheated the people by misusing Sistani's name in their campaign adds. Saa'd concluded that no one in Wasit wants the religious parties to remain in power.

¶6. (S//REL TO USA, ACGU) Comment: Haneen, a former Army General and the CPA's pick for Chief of Police in 2004, is widely seen as a relatively efficient, apolitical and uncorrupted government official. His successful operations in Wasit province have likely weakened the religious parties and their militias. Concerned at this turn of events, the religious parties (not just the Sadrists, but also ISCI and Da'wa) are likely now retaliating through semi-official channels. If Haneen is removed as Wasit Chief of Police it will clearly be a win for the religious parties and their militias. It may also be a serious blow to the development of a secular professional police force and government in Wasit province. End Comment.
CROCKER